Ad Val Advisor

The Newsletter for Wyoming Property Tax Appraisers

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From the Administrator

Dog Days of Summer?

Here in Cheyenne, kids are going back to school. Though the days are warm, the nights are cooling down. "Good sleeping weather" as folks like to say. Yes, it's still summer, but there's no doubt that fall is around the corner. As some like to call it, it's the "dog days of summer." (I don't think anyone has asked the dogs what they think about this.)

Somehow, the implication of "dog days" is that it is a quiet time; that not a whole lot is happening, and that it's a time of transition. Well, for Ad Valorem that is partially true. It is indeed a time of transition; we have begun what will be a two-year-long transition from the old CAMA system to the new CAMA system. As to "quiet", well, it may look like that

from the outside, but from here at Ad Valorem, I can assure you that it is not. The Local Assessed folks have been at 100%+ effort for weeks with Standards/Conversion Committee work and meetings. They have accomplished much, but much remains to do. I should add that all of that work is in addition to the day-to-day tasks. For both the Locally Assessed and State Assessed sections, work is already ongoing in preparation for what will surely be an interesting legislative session this winter.

In nature, underlying the quiet days of late summer and early autumn are the busy preparations for the winter ahead by numerous mountain and plains animals. For us at Ad Valorem, the dog days of summer are absorbed by preparations for a new CAMA system and for the winter's legislative session.

And so it goes . . .

Wade W. Hall
Administrator
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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Introducing the CAMA Project Web Site

Would you like to have more visibility of the Wyoming CAMA project progression? I would like to invite you to come take a look at the

Wyoming CAMA project web site located at:
http://wyocama.sharepointsite.com.

One of the major challenges in the CAMA project has been keeping everyone informed of current events. To help with this issue we have created a website that acts as a coll-ection point for all of the CAMA project information. This site is presently being used by project staff at both the Department of Revenue and at CCI.

At the web site you will find information regarding the Project Plan, Upcoming Events, Announcements, Meeting Minutes, Implementation Issues, and much more. Our ultimate goal is to make this the one-stop shopping for all CAMA project information.

The majority of the information on the site is open for public viewing. Some of the more sensitive information requires a password to view or edit the documents. We are currently working on providing each of the County Assessors with a login for the entire site.

We encourage you to explore the site as the content will be changing daily. Also, please fill out the survey on the site so that we can maximize the efficiency of this web tool!

Kevin Oconnell
Project Manager
Colorado CustomWare, Inc.

Implementation Schedule

I am sure everyone has been anxiously awaiting the release of the implementation schedule for the new Wyoming CAMA system. As we have begun to gather and organize the myriad of project details here at the Ad Valorem Tax Division, two definite facts have emerged. When it comes to implementation, there are two kinds of counties: 1) Those who want to be implemented first; 2) those counties who want to be implemented dead last!

Unfortunately, in this circumstance, we can't all be first nor last. Subsequently, we introduce the dreaded implementation schedule. First, everyone must understand that this schedule is still very much in the draft stages. We have attempted to take a lot of factors into consideration; however, we know there are many more that may affect your individual county.

To determine the order, we first tried to break out the counties into groups by region. We have attempted to place the order where weather and localized special events will not interfere with implementation. The general rule of thumb for implementation is the counties within a region must be prepared to implement at the same time. For example, when we reach the southeast Wyoming region (October 2005 – May 2006), all of the counties in that region (i.e., Converse, Niobrara, Albany, Platte, Goshen and Laramie) must all be ready to implement by October of 2005.

This approach will help keep us on schedule. If, for whatever reason, a county cannot implement, we can proceed through the region. Hopefully, we can pick up that county towards the end of its region's implementation timeframe, and prevent the entire project from falling behind. The region approach also allows the possibility to convert two counties at a time. This approach could help extend our training resources and possibly shave some time off the end of the project. Please note, this approach will be fully tested with Uinta and Sweetwater counties later this year.

Here is the implementation schedule in a nutshell, but not necessarily in this county order:

August 2004 – March 2005
Uinta, Sweetwater

April – June 2005
Lincoln, Sublette, Fremont, Carbon

June – November 2005
Sheridan, Johnson, Campbell, Crook, Weston

November 2005 – March 2006
Converse, Niobrara, Albany, Platte, Goshen, Laramie

April – July 2006
Teton, Park, Big Horn, Washakie, Hot Springs

August -> 2006
Natrona

Again, we will undoubtedly have a clearer picture of the implementation schedule before the end of the year.

David Chapman
Local Assessed Manager
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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Quote of the Month

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers."

Thomas Watson (1874-1956),
Chairman of IBM, 1943

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Corporations Committee Meeting

The Department of Revenue appeared before the Corporations Committee in a meeting held in Cheyenne on August 20, 2004. Ed Schmidt and Wade Hall opened the presentation with some general comments and concerns. David Chapman presented detailed information on the Department's findings and concerns regarding special districts.

Since the new special district legislation passed, the Department has received over two hundred pieces of compliance mail and eight petitions for newly formed districts. Based on this new information, there were three taxing entities dissolved and fifteen newly discovered created.

One major point of discussion centered on the formation document. The Department maintains that the name of a taxing entity may or may not point to the specific statute the entity was formed under. Basically, if the entity is identified with a wrong statute, the wrong set of rules will apply. This is problematic at best.

The Department also discussed the impact of the recent Attorney General's opinion that released both municipalities and school districts from the reporting requirements. Again, the Department maintained that taxing entities can use another taxing entity boundary to help define their own. For example, fire

districts commonly use the boundary of an incorporated city or town. By not including both municipalities and/or school districts, the entity (in this case the fire district) may not be correct. Moreover, the Department also discussed that there are numerous incidents of taxing entities not reporting their formation or boundary changes, let alone within the ten day time period as allowed in statute.

Overall, the Corporations Committee was happy with some of the initial results of the Department's efforts. However, they also recognized that the current statutes create some logistical problems in the process. Subsequently, the Corporations Committee advised the Department to come back with proposed legislation that would help improve the program and endorse (at least initially) the extension of the January 1, 2005, deadline. Also, the Committee supported the Department's use of rule-making authority to help further clarify the suitability of documents used in the compliance process.

Robert Eicher & David Chapman
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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Support Matrix

There have been a lot of questions regarding how support on the new Wyoming CAMA system will be handled. This support question covers a lot of different aspects of the project and can be quite complex.

The purpose of this article is to provide a conceptual model for systems support for the CCI CAMA system as it relates to the State of Wyoming. We hope this model addresses some of the complex hardware/software support required for the CCI CAMA system implementation.

Hardware

The Department of Revenue will be purchasing on-site support for all of the hardware being installed at the State and County jurisdictions. This support is provided through the hardware manufacturer as a warranty agreement and will be managed locally by the County Assessor's office and/or their IT staff.

This hardware support will extend to the equipment purchased by the Department for the project. This will include a CAMA application server, desktop workstations, a front counter workstation, pen pad field collection devices and a printer.

Once the hardware is installed in the County, the Assessor or their IT support will be required to register their equipment with the hardware vendor. This will start the three-year support plan on the equipment. The only exception to this is the servers which will be covered for a five-year warranty period.

Once activated, all support calls will go directly to the hardware manufacturer.

Local Area Network Issues

All connections within the courthouse walls are the responsibility of the County. Any connectivity issues that occur with wiring, routers, switches, etc., will need to be directed to the county IT personnel for resolution.

Wide Area Network Issues

The CCI CAMA system is a fairly self contained application that does not rely heavily on the wide area network for its day-to-day functionality. The main reasons for connectivity to the Wide Area Network are for: 1) the replication of County data to the State DataMart; 2) the upload of tables from the State (i.e., Marshall & Swift cost tables, AG valuation tables, etc.). Slow response or down time on WAN will not necessarily affect the daily operations in the County Assessors office, but may delay the data exchange to and from the State.

Wide Area Network support will start at the Ad Valorem Tax Division. Most commonly, these types of issues will result in a failed replication of county data to the State DataMart. Other support issues may occur when scheduled uploads of Marshall & Swift and State tables fail to reach the county, or connectivity cannot be established for support.

Problem resolution on the WAN will be forwarded to the State A&I Telecommunications group for resolution.

Software

All software support issues will be forwarded to CCI for resolution. CCI will address all system function-ality issues and will act as the first contact on program issues. As needed, CCI will forward callers to third party software vendors for assistance.

To provide a full support service, CCI requires an Internet connection and one of the following:

- Use of a VPN connection,
- Direct connection allowing Incoming Terminal Server connection to the server.
- Outbound NetMeeting con-nections for live end-user desktop shadowing.

Appraisal Issues

All appraisal issues will be directed to the Ad Valorem staff for resolution. The Division will be the primary contact for all policy and procedural issues related to mass appraisal.

Deployment

Project Questions: All project management questions that occur during the deployment of the CCI application will be funneled through David Chapman at the Department and Kevin O'Connell at CCI. They will coordinate all aspects of the project throughout the deployment. This will include all

hardware ordering, scheduling, training, etc.

Data Conversion Questions: The standards committee members represent the needs of their fellow Assessors and respective staff. Moreover, the committee members also represent the needs and requirements of the committee as a whole. The standard that is ultimately recommended by the committee will be the standard adopted by the State. Obviously, if any portion of the standard violates Wyoming law, agency rules, or is economically impossible to implement, the Department retains the right to veto. Counties will be expected to adhere to the adopted standards. Subsequently, all questions and concerns should be directed primarily to the appropriate standards committee for resolution.

Onsite Coordination: Team leaders will be assigned to each county deployment. This will include representation from both the Department and CCI. The team leaders assigned to the county installation will be the primary point of contact for problem resolution and will follow up on any remaining issues. The team leaders will keep the project managers current on all pertinent project information.

Localized Ongoing Maintenance

Once implemented, there are various duties and responsibilities that local installation will be required to perform.

Security: Local staff at each installation site will be individually responsible for securing any equipment and safe-guarding such equipment within their facility. While some of the data tables and functionality will be read-only for the County Assessors and their staff, these tables will be controlled and managed by the Department and CCI.

Basic application security (i.e., user logins) will be managed by the County Assessor. This will allow the Assessor, or their designee, to add and remove employees from the CCI system when needed.

General Equipment Upkeep: Local staff at each installation site will be individually responsible for maintenance and upkeep of equipment received and will, for all intents and purposes, act as owner of the equipment, and other items received to implement the CAMA project. Under consultation from CCI, each installation site will be responsible for all maintenance, warranty inquiries, adjustments, services, equipment and software upgrades, and other requirements associated with equipment.

Uptime: Local staff at each installation site will not be allowed, under non-emergency circumstances, to disconnect or otherwise isolate their individual servers from the electronic connection to the Wide Area Network, or alter security systems on either the County or the Department servers to pre-vent the necessary connections for electronic access. Moreover, the County will need to ensure that the Department and CCI can obtain direct physical access to the server. In short, each County office will need to ensure that the server is up and running and access is available during normal business hours.

Backup and Recovery: Local staff at each installation site will be responsible for all data backups from their local CAMA system installation. Moreover, each site will be required to recover, when necessary, data from the backup tapes. While CCI and the Department may be able to assist with technical support information on "how" to recover data, the actual physical act of retrieving lost or damaged data will require onsite County IT support.

Software Support and Database Administration: There may be times that the CCI deployed software may require localized support. This support option will be used only if the issues cannot be resolved remotely. Under the supervision of CCI, each installation site may require a technically proficient user to install, uninstall or adjust the local CAMA installation. Under this scenario, local IT support will be trained by CCI to perform the basic functions required to keep all of the CCI applications running smoothly. This includes basic Oracle support, software upgrades and patches, etc.

David Chapman
Local Assessed Manager
Ad Valorem Tax Division

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**Upcoming Ad Valorem
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9/21/04 – 9/22/04
IAAO Course 354
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For information on classes, please
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